

1608/1165.
SECRET REASONS

WHY THE
INTENDED INVASION
ON
ENGLAND

WAS

Projected, but not accomplished;

BEING

The Substance of some CONFERENCES lately
held at VERSAILLES.

— Deux raisons, ou mauvaises, ou bonnes.

La FONTAINE.

Translated from the original French, which was burnt by the
common Hangman at Brussels, on Saturday the twenty-second
of September, 1759.

D U B L I N :

Printed for S. SMITH, at Mr. G. FAULKNER's in Essex Street.
MDCCLIX.

[Price Three pence.]

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held at Versailles.

— DUBLIN: Printed by J. G. PARSONS, at the 'Globe' Press, in the Strand, 1804.

— LONDON: Printed by J. G. PARSONS, at the 'Globe' Press, in the Strand, 1804.

Testified that the original French, which was burnt by the
English at Dunkirk, on Saturday the twenty-second
of September, 1793.

DUBLIN:

Printed by J. G. PARSONS, at the 'Globe' Press, in the Strand, 1804.

MCCCLIX.

[Price Three Pence]



The persons that composed this last conference were the Count de Bernis, who by the interest of Madam de Pompadour, is arrived at the prime ministry, to the no small regret of Belleisle, who is only a Paragon. Belleisle, supported by the favour of the King against the too prevailing influence of the King's favourite, who by being contented with the below, in the department of the affairs, still retains his power, though the King has long lost the use of his reason.

I Send you the inclosed, which you are at liberty to shew among yours, and my very good friends; and you may depend upon the relation being truly genuine.

which she has long since loved, rather than as she has by no means the possession of the King's heart. In the most convenient room, with the strictest privacy, in purchasing for him, those several women which have naturally loved to keep him, each to herself. This disappointed as he is, and grown weary to all manner of pleasures and amusements, has permitted this cruel woman to hold the reins of government to the great discontent of his faithful subjects, whose numbers never reach his ears, but by the medium of Belleisle's insinuation and attachment. **RELATION OF A CONFERENCE, &c.**

THE frequent private councils which have been so lately held at the apartments of Madam de Pompadour, engaged the curiosity of some persons about court so deeply, that the last conference actually transpired, through the animosity of those individuals that composed it; which is in substance as follows:

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The persons that composed this last conference, were the Count de Bernis, who by the interest of Madam de Pompadour, is arrived at the prime ministry, to the no small regret of Belleisle, who is truly a Patriot. Belleisle, is supported by the favour of the King against the too prevailing influence of the chief sultana, who by being cateur to Louis the well beloved, in the department of love affairs, still maintains her power, though she has long lost the King's personal affection, that monarch still looking out for fresh beauties, while she as constantly applies herself in procuring them: For all who know any thing of France, must also know, that she has by no means the possession of the king's heart, which she has long since cloyed, farther than as she is the most convenient tool, and the aptest instrument in purchasing for him those several women which have mutually strove to keep him each to herself. Thus, disappointed as he is, and grown averse to all manner of business and application, he has permitted this artful woman to hold the reins of government, to the great discontent of his faithful subjects, whose murmurs never reach his ears, but by the medium of Belleisle's sincerity and attachment to his Royal Person.

Belleisle, being thus supported by his Master, does all that is in his power to support Contades, whom the intrigues of the opposite confederacy, in the persons of Pompadour, her favourites Bernis and Richieu, are carried on to ruin both, in the esteem of the people and the King. When Contades was defeated by Ferdinand in the plains near Minden, a real panic seized the whole nation. It was sudden, unexpected



unexpected, and fatal, as so many other plans depended on the issue of this battle, and were connected with our success.

It was some time before this dreadful intelligence was conveyed to the ears of the King; as every body avoided being the first vehicle of such an ill piece of news; and when it was reported to him, it is affirmed by many, that the King was struck with silence and dismay; upon which he kept himself reserved and retired from all, except those of his own seraglio, especially the young and beautiful Mademoiselle de Vernier daughter of colonel Vernier, of the gens d' arms. It was some time before he cared to think of this terrible event, much less to speak of it; and when he did, it was to Belleisle and Pompadour, whom he desired to confer with Bernis and Richlieu, upon that, and the other bad reports of his affairs, which daily arrived from America, and the West-Indies.

It was upon a strong representation made by the merchants, that he ordered this last conference to be held at the apartments of Madam de Pompadour, at the same time expressing an unusual distrust of the fervency of his councils, or in the maladroitness of those who were to put them in execution. He desired that Belleisle, in concert with the Count de Bernis, Richlieu, and Pompadour, should make a strict scrutiny into the conduct of Contades, whom Belleisle was overwilling to justify, as the others were to condemn: The King left the address of this affair to the direction of Belleisle, and to his known fidelity and attachment; and the marshal accordingly made the above

persons acquainted with his Majesty's pleasure, who accordingly met under the pretence of a *jeu d'esprit*, or private collation. But the meeting of such persons of distinction, though concerted in the most secret manner, could not escape the penetration of the public and the curious, ever watchful in times of calamity, or chagrin, to attend to every little motion of those at the head of affairs: But curiosity is the more sharp-sighted, and suspicion more awakened, when the meeting of such persons, under the cloak of festivity, is formed of and between known and inveterate enemies, long in opposition, and at continual variance in combating each other's principles, and turning each other out of their master's favour.

It seemed proper to give this introductory display of the character of these great personages, with their separate views and interests, incompatible with the nature of festivity or friendship, which could not be supposed to subsist between a known patriot and three caballers. But we must not omit mentioning the personal defects of two of the party; Bernis, being almost blind, and Belleisle deaf as a beetle, which occasioned the popular anecdote, and made the people to say, that the French ministry could neither *hear* nor *see*. Therefore to supply Belleisle's defect, in point of hearing, the other three usually write their sentiments for the inspection of Belleisle, as no speaking trumpet could reach his auditorial nerve.

Marshal de Belleisle opened this great conference, telling them, that he waited on them by his Majesty's commands to consult with persons, who were so much in his Majesty's confidence, and whom he had

had so highly honoured with that particular mark of his esteem and favour; that, for his own part, he could not forbear testifying his acknowledgments to the King, in having received those commands which he then had the honour to deliver, and of being united with persons so well attached to the interests of his master, whose concern he acquainted them was inexpressible, at having heard so many accounts of his miscarriages, he would not say misconduct in the affairs of the nation, which tended to disgrace the honour and dignity of the crown of France, to give their enemies matter of triumph and exultation; that something should be done, and that quickly, to depress the insolence of an insolent and successful enemy, who had availed themselves of either the iniquity or mistakes of administration; which as it was necessarily subordinate, and therefore liable to pass through the hands of many, was like the circulation of money, subject to corruption, frauds or embezzlement, and like the tide, prone to obey its ebb and flow: that as his Majesty had honoured himself with the department of war in most of its branches, especially those relative to Great-Britain, and Flanders; he had meditated the conquest of Hanover in the first place, and had employed an experienced general of known fidelity and known courage: that the plans of operation, which he had furnished him with, were such, as, in his opinion, after mature deliberation, were likely to bid fair for success; and, that though the last affair ended in a defeat of Contades, yet that it must be confessed, that a former manœuvre had succeeded, even to the apparent destruction of the allies; that he had commanded him to attack Prince Ferdinand in his last caducity, as the most likely means, and the most profitable

fitable measure to defeat that general, before he had time to breathe, or recollect himself, after the first overthrow; but that notwithstanding the fair and commendable dispositions which were made for the rendering that attack successful, it by some means fell out contrary to his most sanguine expectations.

Here he was interrupted by Richlieu, who urged against Contades, that he was superior in force to the allies; that his troops were flushed and spirited with their former victory; and therefore the more likely to conquer a dispirited, defeated, and retiring army; that the British Cavalry had no hand in the action, which took off part of that inferior force, which he was to oppose, by which he was repulsed; that he insisted upon it, as he all along had done; that it was a supererogatory step by any means to attack Ferdinand, when it must be confessed in defeating him at first, he had neither time nor crisis on his side; and that he might and ought to have turned his operations to some other course, and more wisely directed them in some other channel, for the glory of the French arms, and the honour of the house of Bourbon; that the superiority of force was no sufficient argument to warrant the measure of an immediate and subsequent attack; and that if it was admitted to be so, yet the superiority was not so great on the side of Contades to justify his conduct; that if the British cavalry did not engage, that was more than Contades could devise or suppose; that that incident was purely owing to a misunderstanding in the delivering of orders, of which Contades could know nothing; that for ought he [Contades] knew, the English troops might as well have fought as stand still; and to sum
up

up the whole, that it was his [Richlieu's] opinion, that it was not always a safe maxim in war to attack the desperate, which often tended to make them more so, and strictly render them brave; and as experience frequently proved as often victorious, which appeared to be the case of Ferdinand's troops, to the utter disgrace of his competitor, and to the discredit of the French arms, the dignity of the house of Bourbon, and the military glory of the nation; that he was not so vain or presumptuous to pique himself by speaking of his conduct in Hanover, when he made the subjects of that electorate lay down their arms, laid it under heavy contributions, and wasted the territory with fire and sword; that he scorned to speak of his success at Minorca, or indeed to compare himself in arms with such as Contades.

This was delivered to Belleisle in writing, which, when he had perused, he remained silent with indignation; and then applying himself to the Count de Bernis, said, Is this fair argument? Who can argue with so strange a sophister? Or, Who can fight against the Lord of hosts? Who can insure victory? Or maintain it when acquired? But I have done. You hate Contades, because I recommended him to that service; but Marshal Richlieu should remember, that D'Estrees paved the way to his successes in Hanover, formed the outlines of conquest, and approached to the very gates of triumph, when he was superseded, only that another might reap the harvest which D'Estrees had sown, and pluck those laurels which were just ready to crown his temples.

This altercation would have grown more warm, if
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the Count de Bernis had not interposed, by saying, That these disputes would not be for the service of the king or the people; that they were not to bear the bandages of old wounds; but to heal new ones; not so much to condemn, or vindicate past measures, as to frame the necessary steps for preventing the like miscarriages. And he was seconded in this interposition by Madam de Pompadour, who said that Contades was grown odious to the people; that they never approved of his being appointed for so important a service; and that it was her humble opinion, with deference to her superiors in sex, knowledge and distinction, that if the Marshal de Richlieu (though he were present, she would be bold to say it) was destined for that service, the affairs of France would have taken another turn; a turn productive of that success, which the king, and his faithful subjects had reason to expect.

The Count de Bernis, on her declining to say any more, threw out many insinuations on unsuccessful generals, on well-concerted dispositions, and the non-execution of them; and seemed to imply, that he thought Belleisle and Contades answerable for them.

He then deviated from the war in Flanders to the affairs in America, which he said were far from being followed according to the plans of operation laid down for their success; and insisted from these two motives, causes, or sources, did arise and spring, as from a fountain, the dismal effects that ensued those unfortunate enterprizes.

Here Madam de Pompadour took him up, warning him to recollect what he had just before advanced, concerning

concerning retrieving those misfortunes, and to suspend adjudging, or determining such remote and distant affairs, as, at present, appeared to her foreign to the business in hand, and indeed barren as to all immediate expedients for remedy.

She wished she said, that her small influence could draw them all back from such considerations, little connected with the present design, and humbly wished that they would take into their immediate inspection the more important concerns at home, particularly that of the finances, which, to her knowledge, were, if not quite exhausted, greatly impoverished; to recruit which, the design of an effectual invasion was laid, planned, and ready for the Coup de Main; and, in expectation of which, all France was filled with uncommon hopes: That the laying aside, and abandoning so glorious a prospect, seemed the rather to claim their present attention, than any other more remote concern; since the people, for some time, and for certain reasons, had laughed at it, as a project not feasible, not to be *accomplished*.

All this was written down for Belleisle, who with some emotion, answered: You are very sensible, Madam, and you, *Sires*, that I never warmly recommended this operation, farther than as I thought it might call away the *British* forces, as it once did, who were not it seems, to be taken in a second time. This was rather wished for than reasonably expected, and the most reasonable laid no farther stress upon this system, than as *Juvenal* observes; *Qui vult decipi, decipiatur*.

We employed our emissaries in Great-Britain, at no small expence, to amuse the subjects of that crown with the reality of that design. Some, here present, did advise, that from a phantom, as it was at first concerted, it might be carried into a real creation; become substantial, and no longer be deemed a mere parade. The kingdom was not to be duped; they never believed it more than an artful speculation of the ministry, to make a powerful diversion on the side of England, as before; and as the reigning system *there*; is *against* continental wars, and *for* littoral attacks; so was I, on the contrary *for* a continental war, and *against* littoral attacks, especially on a nation to whom we are inferior in naval force: yet still should I have been for spiriting up the French nation with the appearance, and dispiriting England with the illusion, so far as it was consonant to practice, or the reason of things: But on the reduction of Guadalope, and their other successes in the West-Indies, and on the forts of Frontenac, Du Quesne, Niagara, &c. not to mention those of Louisburgh, Crown-Point, and the probability of taking Quebec, I thought, and told you my opinion, that it was high time to drop the farce, as it would bring on the French ministry the ridicule, both of the French and English nations, who would equally laugh at those who adopted, or those who seconded so impracticable an expedient; and though I wrote a sanguinary letter to the Prince of Soubize, you well know that it was still intended only as a bugbear, or a stalking horse, to terrify some, and amuse others. But what appears the most important scene of all, next to that of the King of Spain's death, was the defeat of Admiral de la Clue; an affair, that
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of all others tended at once to unmask, and disconcert all our measures.

Had Contades conquered Ferdinand, had de la Clue escaped the vigilance of the English navy, we *then* indeed might, for some time longer, have kept the curtain down: but when those unlooked for calamities fell upon us all at once, suddenly, and like an united storm; surely then, in the eyes of discretion, and in the name of wisdom, it was high time for us to lay by a project in itself essentially vain and unadvisable.

Sir, answered Bernis, you are sensible, that it was once seriously premeditated, and as solemnly entered into by the wisest in the nation, and among them, by yourself. Sir, you were an advocate for it; and at the board of war, when we first complained against the depredations of the English, who were at that time, taking our shipping, before a previous declaration of war, no man was more strenuous more sanguine than yourself, in adopting the principle, the favourite principle of an invasion on England, which you said was a most salutary system, and the only best expedient we had to draw England from her proper attention to her sugar-islands, and her colonies in North-America.

I cannot, I must not, rejoined Madam de Pompadour, forget that memorable period; and I think I can refresh your memories by reminding you, that you had observed, that England had three objects of attention; one of which was foreign and remote from the interests of Great-Britain, which was the pretend-

ed interest on the continent of Europe, and which to preserve, she would sacrifice the other two; if once we could influence a ministry for that end.

The other two are well known, and their new-fangled minister [PITT] saw through the design, and broke it. My friend Richlieu executed one plan, he took Minorca, which threw the whole British nation into an universal panick, as their affairs were before in a deplorable situation, by our having being before-hand with them in North-America. All things seemed on the brink of ruin when PITT was called upon as a saving angel, or a guardian god; he retrieved their affairs by an uncommon assiduity, rarely known among that ministry. He strengthened their navy, and by distracting us, and harrassing our coasts, he soon changed hands. Afterwards Guadalope, Marigalante, and our nursery of seamen, the Northern Plantations, fell into the hands of England; and from being winners we held a most desperate hand.

Contades was defeated on whom so many links of success, as in a chain, depended; for had he conquered, the invasion on England, in my opinion sufficiently practicable, and at all times advisable, would and must have immediately, and subsequently taken place.

The eyes of all Europe were bent on that most important issue, and therefore, to recapitulate in a summary way, I think that the whole French nation is ultimately persuaded, from all the rules of induction and synthetic proof, that Contades's defeat broke that great operative plan, which coinciding with the
King

King of Spain's death, an accident highly correlative to the interests of the line of Bourbon, has been the source, and the most immediate, the heaviest and most, approximate cause of all the consequent miseries of France.

This speech of Pompadour's being written for, and perused by M. Belleisle, he, with a solemn air, not unbecoming his dignity, said, Madam, though the honour and interests of France—[Here he was interrupted by an officer of the guards, who informed the company, colonel de la Cour, now waiting below, was dispatched from the King with some messages of importance, and begged admittance. De la Cour was introduced, and he delivered into Belleisle's hands a letter, which he read as follows:

To the Marechal Duc de Belleisle, &c.

BELLEISLE,

I Wonder at your long conference, without having heard any thing of the result. Foyette has just now informed me of a compleat victory gained by Soltikoff over the king of Prussia. I believe it. So may you. Why stays La Pompadour. Return with the result, how my arms may be employed to annoy the Islanders!

LOUIS.

and underneath, VATAN.

This letter threw the confederate chiefs into confusion. Soltikoff's victory amazed them, as it came from

from a quarter they little expected: Richlieu doubted its veracity, and wrote his sentiments to Belleisle on that head; who, after perusal, seemed inflamed with virulence against the writer, and told him, It was the duty of a subject to believe the words of his King; and those who did not, were enemies to his crown.

It was sometime before they were unanimous, what result they should carry to the King: At length it was agreed, That as the Russians had gained a victory, it might, in his Majesty's wisdom, alter the system of affairs; and therefore his sentiments concerning that matter, were first, necessary to be acquainted with, ere they proceeded farther.

This, in fact, you know was the same as doing nothing; and thus broke up the conference, without having properly or truly stated any one case, either as to interest or credit. Such is the cabal, confusion, and distraction of the French Court.

No sooner arrives the news of a defeat, than the ministry are, as it were, drove to their wits ends, and the disparity with which they receive it is incredible.

Richlieu and Bernis hate Contades and Montcalm.

——The former is supported by Belleisle; and the latter by the King.——Pompadour hates d'Etrees, but the good friends of France adore him.

——Belleisle hates Lally, Pompadour loves him.

——Belleisle is working the downfall of Conflans by endeavouring to supplant him with Bompard.——

But Conflans is a courtier, and as such, the friend of

Richlieu

Richlieu, who almost movèd heaven and earth in his favour.——De la Clue * is a friend of Belleisle's, who covers his disgrace.——Richlieu and Bernis hate him.——Pompadour is indifferent; and the King is of no import.

This, my dear friend, is the true state of the French court.——When it will alter, God knows——Peace can never come at a more agreeable juncture, than the present; nor by any body more heartily wished for, than,

Dear Friend,

Your most obedient, &c.

* Since dead of the wounds he received in the late Engagement with Admiral Boscawen.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AFTER presenting to the reader as literal a translation from the French of the pamphlet published at Brussels, on Thursday the twentieth of September last, as the idioms of the two languages would admit, it may not be amiss to inform him by what means we procured the original.

Since it has been said in the public papers, *It is very difficult to obtain one*; it is so. The copy which came to England, was one of those which were first delivered out by the publisher; the purchaser sent it to his friend, a printer in Amsterdam, who at first entertained some thoughts of reprinting it, and even made some progress towards it, when from a motive at present imprudent to declare, he declined; and shewing the copy to an acquaintance, was requested to part with it, to which after some hesitation, he consented; and the gentleman whose property it was sent it to England.



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The editor of the translation takes this public opportunity of acknowledging his obligations to those gentlemen who favoured him with the copy, nor could any thing do him more honour, or give him more satisfaction, than their permission for him to name the channel through which he received it.

The EDITOR.

[illegible]